

Joint Meeting between the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the College of Occupational Therapists

CLEPHANE HUME, Lecturer, Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh

This second joint meeting was held on 29 October 1987 as part of the quarterly meeting of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Four areas of mutual concern had been identified for consideration: economics, ethnic minorities, work and self-care.

The meeting was opened by Margaret Ellis, College of Occupational Therapists Chairman, who welcomed those present and stressed the value of such discussions.

The first speaker, Dr Julie Hollyman, emphasised the need to recognise the wealth of occupational therapy by identifying its core features. While there were factors in common with other professions, she stressed that the unique value of the profession is its activity base. Dr Hollyman put forward the case for the economic value of maintaining a high input of services for long-term patients.

The need for research was echoed by the next speaker, Elizabeth Watt, who also highlighted the need for occupational therapists to determine "what exactly you do that no other members of the team do". Miss Watt posed several questions which could point to standards of care and quality assurance. "Would I like to be referred to my unit? Would I pay for the treatment?" She also referred to the need to train as many therapists as possible.

The second topic, working with ethnic minorities, was introduced by Stephanie Correia, who said that the interest in this area of work had been evidenced by the number of replies she had received in response to a request in the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Miss Correia focused on knowledge, and the need to educate members of the profession for working in a multicultural society. She gave examples of problems encountered, such as difficulty with patients' names, finding effective interpreters, and lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of both patient and therapist.

Dr Norman Kaye provided statistics from Leicester to illustrate the use of psychiatric services by immigrants. He made reference to attitudes towards illness and the response of the family. He referred to the work of Dr Philip Rack in highlighting diagnostic pitfalls and differences in the presentation of illness.

Discussion identified the implications for community services since this seemed to be the most successful area for development. Further discussion continued during the

tea break, after which the chair was taken by Dr Douglas Bennett. Judith Reid described the conflicts surrounding work rehabilitation and the implications for treatment. She demonstrated the need for a variety of services catering for patients returning to a job and those who had been involved in various training schemes or who had never worked. She pointed out the value of sheltered work and educational routes to work and reminded her audience of the potential of the developing role of self-employment. The need to investigate this further was clearly indicated.

Dr Mounir Ekdawi reminded the audience of research which identified the value of occupation and referred to the debate surrounding the effects of unemployment. Defining work as purposeful activity, including that carried out by housewives and students, Dr Ekdawi demonstrated the value of work. He also discussed the views of families and patients in regard to employment.

During the ensuing discussion, various co-operative projects were identified and Dr Bennett requested details of any further examples.

The final topic was self-care. Sally-Ann Defriez described a community skills group which had been developed with acute patients for whom the immediate aim was not return to work. A Manpower Services Commission worker had gathered information about community resources. Patients had become involved in activities in the local community (such as yoga classes) and had collaborated in establishing their own goals for participation in projects.

The final speaker, Professor Sacks, introduced the needs of mentally handicapped patients in respect of self-help skills. The experience of success was crucial to the achievement of independence. He pointed to areas such as social skills, ADL (activities of daily living) and the value of behavioural techniques, and quoted the Audit Commission report which stated that the skills of occupational therapists were central to community care. In conclusion, Professor Sacks emphasised the need for occupational therapists and psychiatrists to continue their dialogue and to co-operate in providing evidence for adequate funding for resources.

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